



Beyond the Sources • The Falls

Using the information you gather on the web site, answer the following questions about the unit.

1. One way to examine change over time in an area is to look at "before and after" photographs. What details can we learn about how an area changed from "before and after" photographs that we couldn't learn as easily from other sources?

Details such as the construction or demolition of buildings, paved or gravel roads, clothing styles, kinds of automobiles, etc...can all be determined through the use of before and after photographs.

How can we use before and after photographs to draw some conclusions about changes in the lives of people who lived in an area?

If we study a before and after photograph from the time period of a person's life (i.e. a "before" picture from when they were young and an "after" picture from later in their life), we can see how transportation, shopping, home building, and other daily details of their life might have changed. For example, we might see gas lanterns in the "before" photograph and electric lights in the "after" photograph, which would suggest to us that their daily life might have changed because of access to electricity.

2. Since photographs have not always been available, historians have often had to rely on works of art as historical sources. What are some of the dangers in trusting a work of art as a historical source?

Works of art are not exact replicas of an event or a subject. The artist can interpret the subject of the artwork as they wish, so the information provided may not always be exactly accurate and, in many cases, the artist may not have even been present at the event and is just showing what they imagine the scene to have been.

What issues might you need to consider when studying artwork as a source?

It is important to consider the artist and their time period, what perspective they might have on the issue they are presenting, and whether or not they were present at the event they describe in their artwork.

What other sources might you use to prove or disprove any questions you might have about the subject the work of art portrays?

Diaries of people involved in the event shown, historical accounts of the event, photographs of the location, and any information about the artist would all help to make the artwork more clear and the artist's perspective more understandable.

3. Scholarly articles like the one about the geology of the Falls can help us to better understand how a landform is created and how it might be preserved. How might we be able to tell if the author of a scholarly article is our best source for information?

It is sometimes difficult to tell how reliable an author is, but looking at their credentials

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(degrees, books written, honors received, etc...) and comparing their information to other articles written about the same topic can all help us determine the reliability of an author.

What other sources might we use to determine how reliable his or her article might be?

Articles by other scholars about the same topic, information about the author's life and work, and other accounts of the event or issue in newspapers.

Why would this be important for our research?

If an author is not reliable, it would be a mistake to base all of our conclusions on that author's work. By determining our author's reliability, we can have a better understanding of how that author's work fits in to other work on the same topic, and how much emphasis to give the work of that author in our research.

4. The diagram of the dike at St. Anthony Falls shows us how a cross-section can be used as a source of information for our research. How is studying a cross-section different from studying a map or a simple drawing?

In studying a cross-section, we need to be able to visualize the object as if it were cut in half. We can then see how the parts of the object work together.

What special information or perspective can a cross-section give us that other sources cannot?

A map of St. Anthony Falls can show us where the Falls is located, but not how the Falls functions or why it was receding. Other cross-sections can show us how something is made and how it works. This information might be difficult to obtain in a map or diagram that is not as detailed.

In what topics of study do you think a cross-section might be most useful to you as source?

Answers will vary, but students might suggest biology, engineering, geology, science, architecture, and others.